

Message Text

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PAGE 01 COPENH 04046 201621Z
ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 L-03 PA-01
ICA-11 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 /066 W
-----003680 201857Z /72

R 201530Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6734
INFO AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
USMISSION GENEVA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE COPENHAGEN 4046

EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: PDIP, SOP, SHUM, UG, DA
SUBJ: UGANDAN BRINGS LIBEL SUIT AGAINST DANISH NEWSPAPER

REF: GENEVA 9272

1. AN UNUSUAL COURT CASE INVOLVING UGANDA'S HIGHEST-RANKING
DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVE TO DENMARK, NORWAY AND SWEDEN
RECEIVED EXTENSIVE MEDIA PLAY THIS PAST WEEK.
UGANDAN CHARGE D'AFFAIRES JAMES BABA HAD SUED THE
EDITOR OF EKSTRA BLADET, A POPULAR TABLOID, FOR ITS
DESCRIPTION OF BABA AS "A MASS MURDERER" AND "IDI AMIN'S
ERRAND BOY." ON JUNE 17 THE COURT ACQUITTED THE EDITOR
AND ASSESSED BABA 140,000 DKR (APPROX 7US\$25,000)
IN COSTS.

2. THE CASE BEGAN IN NOVEMBER 1977 WHEN EKSTRA BLADET
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PUBLISHED AN INTERVIEW WITH FORMER UGANDAN HEALTH
MINISTER HENRY KYEMBA. KYEMBA HAD STATED THAT HE WAS
SHOCKED TO FIND JAMES BABA, "A MASS MURDERER," AS
UGANDA DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVE IN SCANDINAVIA.
DENYING KYEMBA'S ALLEGATIONS, BAB BROUGHT SUIT
AGAINST THE TABLOID FOR PRINTING THE REMARKS.

DURING LAST WEEK'S HEARINGS, EKSTRA BLADET CALLED NINE UGANDAN REFUGEES NOW LIVING IN DENMARK, SWEDEN, BRITAIN AND KENYA TO TESTIFY IN ITS DEFENSE. AMONG THE NINE WERE THREE FORMER MINISTERS IN THE UGANDAN GOVERNMENT: HENRY KYEMBA (HEALTH), GODFREY LULE (JUSTICE) AND JOSHUA W. KIBEDI (FOREIGN MINISTRY). THESE THREE TOLD THE COURT AND MEDIA INTERVIEWERS TALES OF WITNESSING ATROCITIES COMMITTED BY BABA AND BY THE UGANDAN SECURITY AGENCY, THE "STATE RESEARCH BUREAU".

4. REMARKABLE ABOUT THE CASE WAS THE FACT THAT BABA HIMSELF WAS NOT PRESENT DURING THE PROCEEDINGS. HIS DANISH LAWYER INFORMED THE COURT THAT THE DIPLOMAT HAD BEEN CALLED HOME FOR CONSULTATIONS AND THEN HAD SENT WORD THAT HE WILL ILL. QUESTIONED AFTER THE VERDICT HAD BEEN HANDED DOWN, BABA'S LAWYER COULD NOT PREDICT WHETHER HIS CLIENT WOULD APPEAL THE CASE NOR WHETHER HE WOULD RETURN TO DENMARK.

5. HENRY KYEMBA, ONE OF THE KEY WITNESSES, TOLD REPORTERS THAT IDI AMIN HIMSELF PROBABLY ORDERED BABA BACK TO UGANDA BECAUSE BABA HAD NOT TOLD HIM OF THE SUIT IN ADVANCE. KYEMBA OBSERVED THAT BABA HAS "AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE AHEAD."

6. COMMENT: THE CASE WAS UNUSUAL NOT ONLY BECAUSE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF BABA'S ABSENCE AND THE GRUESOME ACCOUNTS OF THE DEFENSE WITNESSES, BUT BECAUSE BABA PURSUED IT AT ALL. OFFICIALS IN THE MFA ARE TAKING A "WAIT AND SEE" ATTITUDE IN TERMS OF POSSIBLY DECLARING BABA PERSONNA NON GRATA SHOULD HE RETURN TO DENMARK. THE DANES HAVE SAID THEY WOULD CONSULT WITH THEIR COLLEAGUES IN NORWAY AND SWEDEN, AS BABA IS ALSO ACCREDITED TO THOSE COUNTRIES. END COMMENT.
DEAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LITIGATION, NEWSPAPERS, DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978COPENH04046
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780257-0477
Format: TEL
From: COPENHAGEN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780641/aaaabjoz.tel
Line Count: 103
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 475ec785-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION HA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 GENEVA 9272
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2289938
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UGANDAN BRINGS LIBEL SUIT AGAINST DANISH NEWSPAPER
TAGS: PDIP, SOPN, SHUM, UG, DA, (BABA, JAMES)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/475ec785-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014